

Special Council Meeting  
Wednesday August 18, 1999

President Eline called the Special Meeting to order at 7:00 PM with Councilors Giles, Andrews, Murphy, Streeter and Woodward present. Also present were Mayor Troxell, Manager Sterner and a standing room only audience.

Mr. Eline announced the purpose of the meeting: to revisit Council's October 14, 1998 position paper on the National Park Service (NPS) General Management Plan (GMP) and any other business that may come before Council.

Mr. Eline welcomed all and informed the audience that the customary public comment period would be provided at the beginning of the meeting, with citizens and taxpayers invited to address Council but limited to 5 minutes.

John Schwartz announced his objections to the public/private partnership for the proposed new visitor center. He believes the federal government should provide the funds for its construction. He also disagrees with the proposal to include a restaurant.

George Lower reminded Council of its responsibility to represent the people. He asked Council to hold its position and to continue to seek congressional oversight.

Craig Caba supports the original position paper due to technical and factual flaws in the GMP. He urged Council to continue opposition to the GMP and support the Klink amendment.

Wes Ayre remains opposed to the visitor center component of the GMP. He urged Council to remain opposed.

Bob Monahan noted that in his opinion nothing has changed since October 1998. He supports the original position of Council.

Earl (Jerry) Coates informed Council that he is totally in favor of the GMP. The cities of Harrisburg, PA and Hagerstown, MD are building new Civil War museums that will compete with Gettysburg. He noted that he is a new citizen to Gettysburg, having retired after a federal career as a museum director. In his experience our visitor center is not up to date. The battle lines on which the current visitor center and cyclorama stand should be restored. Tourism will be increased with a new state of the art visitor center, with tourists staying longer. He cares much about the Borough and the Park and believes that what is good for one is good for the other.

Vickie Monrean, Director of the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg spoke in favor of the GMP. She urged Council to make a decision for the future of the town and nation. She opined that the GMP may have been flawed, but that the direction it gives is good for Gettysburg.



Dr. John Latschar reported that he obviously supports the GMP and that he is prepared to answer Council's questions. He expressed his gratification that the NPS and Borough have made significant progress with the interpretive plan over the past year. He noted that no one can predict what will happen politically in Washington over the next weeks and months but whatever happens, he will continue to work with the town for the benefit of both the NPS and the Borough.

Tammy Myers presented Council with a document entitled "Just the Facts" prepared by a consultant hired by the Wax Museum. She believes that it is critical that Council re-affirms its original position.

Eric Uberman re-affirmed his opposition to the plan. He agreed with several statements of Mr. Eline including commending Cong. Goodling for his statement to build the new visitor center at the current location; agreed with Mr. Eline that the process was flawed, that the Borough forced the NPS to the table. He still agrees with the October position of Council and that we should not be intimidated by the NPS, remain firm in our resolve and be a formidable force.

Gerry Bennet remarked that he favors the GMP, but that he, along with many, are becoming weary of the controversy. There have been several positive developments as a result of the GMP. A good partnership was born in the Steering Committee made up of various members of the community that will pull together to build a market. He believes Council should take a leadership position, move ahead and endorse the GMP based on the positive actions of the NPS over the last year.

Emmet Patterson reminded Council of its courage last October. He believed the economic study as a part of the GMP was much too broad, that a Borough based study has not been performed. He posed the question: how can a decision be based on a flawed study?

Rick Codori opposed the GMP, believing it to be a cruel injustice to the town.

Dick Peterson agreed with Mr. Patterson. He noted that nothing has changed since October 1998. He asked that Council not be intimidated by the prospects of the Wills House.

At the conclusion of the public comment period, President Eline asked for comment from Council.

Mr. Streeter noted he was very uncomfortable with the current situation. He agrees with Ms. Monrean. All that needs to be said has been said, many motives have been raised both personal and political. The original position is clear in that the process was flawed; take the time to do it right; and ask our elected officials in Washington for oversight. There may be other issues for discussion but there is no need to re-affirm.



Mr. Eline reminded Council that it did have an audience with Senator Santorum and Congressman Goodling. He suggested that Council may not have heard what it wanted to hear from our legislators, but that we should accept it and move on.

Mr. Steeter noted that congress is not finished with its discussion on the GMP.

Mr. Eline is suspicious of Cong. Klink's motives due to timing, that he is taking advantage of Gettysburg for his political gain. He resents the political opportunism of Mr. Klink and that he is using Gettysburg.

Mr. Streeter noted that motives are not important. We should be examining the results. Most everything involved in this issue is personal or political. Mr. Streeter stands firm in that the process was flawed.

Mayor Troxell reminded Council that he too, had signed the October 1998 position paper. He continues to view the process as flawed. He added that he is pleased with the cooperation with NPS over the past year. Council should not concern itself about political motives, only support its citizens. He acknowledged that the NPS needs new visitor facilities, but the current GMP does not support or address our needs. He urged Council to re-affirm its position.

Mr. Andrews announced that he supports Mr. Streeter in this matter. All contacts from his constituents support the original Council position.

Ms. Giles noted that if Council desires to re-do its position, it will need to go through the entire process as in October 1998. To hold hearings and re-evaluate all issues. She asked if there was anything that needed or required change?

Mr. Streeter remarked that should Congress approve the GMP, he will be satisfied. He opined that he does not care if the new visitor center is a Walmart nor does he oppose the GMP. He opposes the process, as the GMP should reflect the will of the people.

Mr. Eline commented that the public knows that he has changed his position on the matter of the GMP and new visitor center. In his opinion, it is time to move on. He does not suggest that Council re-do the process or change its position just for him.

Ms. Giles suggested that we might want to take the lead in renewing the process, but that it would be a long, tedious process.

Mr. Woodward reported that the majority of constituents that talked with him support the original position of Council, however Council has heard from two from the Third Ward tonight that support the NPS GMP.

Mr. Murphy reminded Council that he was in the audience when the position was first developed. Since that time he was appointed to Council and has not read the



position until very recently. He commented that it was done very well and very clearly. He advises that Council continue the course, noting that very positive things have occurred as a result, that the other agencies that have been brought in have had a positive affect, and with the various politicians involved, at times one needed a scorecard to keep up. We have failed to get the congressional review that we wanted and it could be that the GMP may be non-negotiable, however we have brought the NPS to the table on town issues. He is very pleased that the NPS is assisting with the economic development plans, but believes that the Borough could be successful on its own. NPS involvement makes it better. He is not fearful that if we do not cooperate with NPS they will pull out. What we are doing together now will be good for the NPS, it expands their mission and their opportunity. If and when the Borough starts working together, the community will greatly benefit. For the time being, it seems that the Commonwealth is our best friend with the possibility of an \$18 million grant for Historic Pathways. In his final recommendation, he advises that Council continue the good dialogue with NPS on Historic Pathways initiatives and re-affirm its October 14, 1998 position by roll call vote.

Mr. Eline agreed that the state grant is exciting, but how could the community turn down \$40 to \$70 million in new capital for a new visitor center to better the visitor experience? That will be a tremendous investment for the town that he would not want to lose. He is reminded of the 1979 attempt to build a new visitor center, and we waited 20 years for this attempt.

Mr. Murphy noted the times are different. In his opinion, we will not need to wait 20 years.

Mr. Streeter noted the \$18 million is real but the \$40 million is a maybe. In any case all agree that a new visitor center is needed.

Mayor Troxell remarked that if the current GMP is not approved, he hopes that the Borough will take the initiative to work with the NPS to develop a new process and new GMP.

Ms. Giles asked if there was any merit to voting, rather to maintain the status quo and wait patiently until Congress makes its decision.

Mr. Eline commented that he is willing to wait, to release nothing more, with no copies sent to other parties.

Mr. Andrews suggested that Council vote again in view of Mr. Eline's recent public remarks. Its purpose will be to show that Council, as a group, has not changed its position.

Mr. Streeter noted that if Council takes no action, the press may headline it tomorrow with "Council fails to re-affirm it's position", giving a false impression of tonight's discussion and of Council's position.

Mr. Streeter then proceeded with the motion – that Council re-affirm its position as outlined in the October 14, 1998 position paper. Mr. Andrews made the second.

Mr. Eline cautioned that his vote would be negative, that the position would no longer be unanimous.

Ms. Giles replied that his recent comments were within the parameters of the original position.

The vote was taken with Mr. Woodward, Ms. Giles, Mr. Andrews, Mr. Streeter and Mr. Murphy voting yea, and Mr. Eline voting nay. President Eline declared the motion adopted.

President Eline proceeded with the meeting by ordering an executive session to discuss real estate matters, in particular the Wills House. He therefor asked all other than Council, Mayor and Manager Sterner to retire.

After a brief executive session, Manager Sterner was instructed to proceed with negotiations and/or discussions with the president of the Eisenhower Society, the owners of the Wills House, for the ultimate purchase thereof.

With no further business, President Eline declared the meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles W. Sterner  
Borough Manager

